

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 /035 W

----- 025320

R 061140Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7949

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 TEHRAN 6825

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IR

SUB: IRAN'S CAPACITY TO ABSORB SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT

REFS: (A) TEHRAN 4481 (DTG 041225Z MAY 76) (NOTAL),

B(B) 75 TEHRAN 12556 (DTG 310752Z DEC 76) (NOTAL)

(C) STATE 022255 (DTG 291507Z MAY 76) (NOTAL,

(D) CNO 012114Z JUN 76 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PROBLEMS OF IRAN'S ASSIMILATION OF NEW MILITARY EQUIPMENT WILL WEIGH HEAVILY UPON OUR POSITION HERE FOR NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. IT IS CLEAR THAT WE HAVE BOTH INTEREST AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF WEAPONS WE HAVE SUPPLIED. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THERE ARE DEFINITE LIMITS ON U.S. SUPPORT. DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS THERE WILL BE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN IRANIAN SERVICES FOR WHICH WE WILL OFTEN BE UNJUSTLY BLAMED. WE BELIEVE THAT WE MUST MAKE SYSTEMATIC EFFORT TO KEEP IRANIANS AWARE OF EVOLVING REQUIREMENTS GENERATED BY NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND THEIR PROGRESS OR LACK OF IT. OUR APPROACH SHOULD BE POSITIVE AND DIRECTED TOWARD FINDING SOLUTIONS. AND FOR THE FUTURE WE SHOULD BE MORE ANALYTICAL, ORDERLY AND PROMPT IN HANDLING GOI REQUESTS FOR ADVANCED WEAPONS SYSTEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IRAN'S SKILLED MANPOWER, CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURES WILL BE SEVERELY TAXED BY

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HEAVY REQUIREMENTS OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS NOW ON HAND OR

SCHEDULED FOR EARLY DELIVERY. (FOR EXAMPLE, F-4ES AND F-14S ARE NOW BEING DELIVERED. SPRUANCE SHIPS AND TANG SUBMARINES WILL BEGIN TO ARRIVE AROUND 1979-80. STRONG INTEREST HAS BEEN EXPRESSED IN F-16, F-18 AND AWACS AIRCRAFT.) IN RECENT MONTHS, QUESTION OF BURDEN ON USG AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND REACTION IN THIS SITUATION HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF NUMEROUS DISCUSSIONS AND MESSAGES. WHILE NATURE OF PROBLEMS WILL VARY FROM SYSTEM TO SYSTEM AND OVER TIME, AND EACH SPECIFIC PROBLEM MUST BE ADDRESSED ACCORDING TO ITS DIMENSIONS, THERE ARE CERTAIN GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SEEM TO US TO APPLY ACROSS THE BOARD.

2. MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES. IN FIRST PLACE, WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT ALTHOUGH GOI MADE ALL DECISIONS TO BUY ADVANCED WEAPONS SYSTEMS, USG PLAYED ACTIVE ROLE IN NUMBER OF CASES WITH POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON IRANIAN CHOICES. IRANIANS WERE EAGER TO BUY, BUT IN THE PAST AMERICAN MILITARY SERVICES PERCEIVED A SERVICE INTEREST TO SELL AND IN CERTAIN CASES APPARENTLY SUBTLE INFLUENCE WAS EXERTED ON IRANIANS TO ACQUIRE ADVANCED SYSTEMS. DURING PERIOD OF INTENSE PROCUREMENT ACTIVITY, IRANIANS DID NOT ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT MANPOWER, CONSTRUCTION AND COST IMPLICATIONS OF NEW SYSTEMS, AND WE DID NOT, AS A GENERAL RULE, VOLUNTEER THAT INFORMATION. THERE WAS AT THAT TIME ON BOTH SIDES A TENDENCY TOWARDS WISHFUL THINKING OR RELUCTANCE TO FACE UNPLEASANT FACTS. THEREFORE, IRANIANS FEEL STRONGLY THAT RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT PROPER INTEGRATION OF SYSTEMS IS SHARED BY USG AS AN IMPLIED POLITICAL COMMITMENT. EFFORTS BY U.S. SERVICES TO DATE TO BACK UP WEAPONS FROM THEIR INVENTORIES ARE MOST COMMENDABLE, FOR IRAN IS STILL THE IMPORTANT ALLY AND GOOD FRIEND THAT IT WAS WHEN WE READILY AGREED TO SELL IT SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT. WE HAVE A DEFINITE INTEREST IN PRESERVING AND, IF POSSIBLE, ENHANCING OUR TIES WITH THIS COUNTRY. OUR LONGSTANDING SUPPORT FOR IRAN'S MILITARY DEVELOPMENT IS AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT IN OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP, AND CONTINUED EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR U.S. WEAPONS SYSTEMS IS A PREREQUISITE FOR GOOD COUNTRY-TO-COUNTRY RELATIONS. THAT IS NOT TO SAY, OF COURSE, THAT WE SHOULD PROCESS IRANIAN REQUESTS FOR NEW HARDWARE WITHOUT REGARD TO FULL RANGE OF IMPLICATIONS. INCREASED AWARENESS AND USG-GOI DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS CAN BE HIGHLY BENEFICIAL IF HANDLED WISELY.

3. LIMITATIONS ON U.S. ROLE. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT IRANIAN MILITARY IN THIS CRITICAL PERIOD IS NOT OPEN-ENDED. CONGRESSIONAL

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SENSITIVITIES, LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF OUR ARMED FORCES WILL NOT PERMIT SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN SIZE OF OFFICIAL COMMUNITY. IN OUR VIEW, NUMBERS OF DEFENSE CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL SHOULD ALSO BE HELD TO MINIMUM NECESSARY FOR TASKS AT HAND. (SIZE OF WORK FORCE OF FIRMS UNDER FMS CONTRACTS IS SUBJECT TO DOD REGULATION## WE CANNOT SOLVE AND SHOULD NOT TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL IRANIAN IMPEDIMENTS TO DEVELOPMENT. CONSTRUCTION, PORT CONGESTION AND TRANSPORTATION DEFICIENCIES, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE GENERALLY

BEYOND OUR SCOPE. IN SUCH CASES, WE WILL BE LIMITED TO MAKING SUGGESTIONS OR RECOMMENDING DELAYS OR REDUCTIONS IN PROGRAMS.

4. MEASUREMENT. NO INTELLIGENT OBSERVER WHO TRAVELS ANY DISTANCE IN THIS COUNTRY, OR REMAINS HERE ANY PERIOD OF TIME, CAN AVOID EXPOSURE TO THE GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND ACTUAL LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT. BECAUSE THOSE IMPRESSIONS OF DIFFICULTIES WITH ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY ARE VALID DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY CAN READILY BE ESTABLISHED. THERE ARE FEW RELIABLE IRANIAN STATISTICS ON SUCH MATTERS AS REQUIREMENTS FOR SKILLED MANPOWER DURING CURRENT FIVE YEAR PLAN, QUANTITIES OF MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR CONSTRUCTION OR COSTS OF FOREIGN LABOR. FOR EXAMPLE, GOI HAS ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SKILLED

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MANPOWER SHORTFALL VARIOUSLY AT 40,000, 100,000 AND 700,000. FURTHER, ESTIMATES OF THIS KIND THAT WE HAVE SEEN DO NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESS DESTINATIONS OF WHICH SPECIFIC SKILLS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY. EVEN IF BETTER STATISTICS WERE PRODUCED, THEY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE USEFUL FOR EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. IN A CENTRALLY-DIRECTED STATE, GOVERNMENT HAS GREAT FREEDOM IN SHIFTING MANPOWER AND OTHER RESOURCES BETWEEN PROJECTS ACCORDING TO ITS OWN CHANGING PRIORITIES. DESPITE THESE WEAKNESSES IN MAKING PRECISE ESTIMATES, CERTAIN STATISTICS ARE AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN PERSONNEL, I.E., NUMBER OF TRAINING SLOTS NOT FILLED, RATE OF FAILURES IN TRAINING PROGRAMS, OBSERVED PACE OF CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND OTHER MATTERS WITHIN OUR PURVIEW.

5. SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES. THERE WILL BE OCCASIONS WHEN IT WILL BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TO INTRODUCE CONSIDERATIONS GX ZNBJPTVLE (#)

CAPACITY IN IRANIAN PLANNING. FIRST CASE IS WHERE A SYSTEM HAS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL INTEREST AND IT SERVES BORAD JG OBJECTIVES TO AUHGORIZA SALE. F-14 IS PRIME EXAMPLE. PROGRAM IS NOW EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES WHICH, IF FORESEEN FOUR YEARS AGO, MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED OR DELAYED IRANIAN DECISION. THOSE DIFFICULTIES NOTWITHSTANDING, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT, FOR POLITICAL REASONS, USG DECISION WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT. BUT IT IS CLEAR NOW THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE IF WE HAD BEEN MORE ANALYTICAL AND LESS SALES- MOTIVATED IN OUR APPROACH TO FANQRXQT SALE. SECOND DIFFICULTY ARISES FROM PRE-SECRET

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SENTATION OF SELF-SERVING POINT OF VIEW ON SYSTEMS BY DEFENSE CONTRACTORS, SOMETIMES AT HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOI. DURING RECENT MONTHS HEADS OF NORTHROP, GECRAL DEF&8: , LOCKHEED, HUGHES, LITTON, GRUMMAN, BOEING, AND ROCKWELL, AMONG OTHERS, HAVE VISITED TEHRAN. AS A GENERAL RULE, THEY ARE RECEIVED BY THE SHAH AND CONTRIBUTE IN AN IMPORTANT WAY TO STIMULATION OF GOI APPETITE FOR NEW HARDWARE. THIS IS A FACT OF LIFE FOR US AND THERE IS NO THOUGHT OF MUZZLING COMPANY AUTHORIZATION TO DISCUSS THEIR DEFENSE PRODUCTS. HOWEVER, WE DO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN TO ASSURE THAT ACCURATE AND BALANCED INFORMATION REACHES GOI. WHERE POSSIBLE IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO CONVEY THIS WITHOUT APPEARING TO TAKE ISSUE WITH A SPECIFIC COMPANY POSITION, BUT AT TIMES THAT MAY BE NECESSARY TO MAKE SURE IRANIANS ARE NOT MISLED.

6. GOI POSITION. WE KNOW THAT SENIOR IRANIAN MILITARY LEADERS, INCLUDING, ON SPECIFIC SUBJECTS, THE SHAH, ARE AWARE OF PROBLEMS OF ABSORBING NEW EQUIPMENT. REF (A) OUTLINED RECENT STATEMENTS BY THREE SUCH OFFICIALS. BASIC THEME IS THAT SPECTACULAR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO DATE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH RELENTLESSLY FORCED PACE. IT FOLLOWS THAT IRAN CANNOT AWAIT EVOLUTION OF USUAL PRE-CONDITIONS FOR NEW PROGRAMS, I.E., INFRASTRUCTURE OR POOL OF SKILLED MANPOWER. IRANIANS FEEL THAT THEY MUST TACKLE PROBLEMS EVEN THOUGH MANY KEY LEADERS DO NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING SOLUTIONS. DESPITE THIS AWARENESS ON THEIR PART, PROUD IRANIAN LEADERSHIP WILL NOT REACT KINDLY TO BLUNT AND NEGATIVE CRITICISM OF COUNTRY'S ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY. SHAH AND HIS MILITARY DEPUTIES WOULD NOT ACCEPT DENIAL OF SALE OF ADVANCED EQUIPMENT ON GROUNDS THAT IRAN CANNOT UTILIZE IT EFFECTIVELY. THEY BELIEVE THAT, AS A BUYER WILLING TO PAY CASH, IRAN SHOULD MAKE ITS OWN DECISIONS ON WHAT SYSTEMS IT WILL ACQUIRE AND HOW THEY WILL BE ASSIMILATED. AT BEST, IRANIANS WOULD REGARD DENIAL OF SALE BECAUSE OF ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY ARGUMENT AS DECEPTION MASKING A DIVERGENCE IN POLICIES OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES. THIS UNDERSCORES NEED TO APPROACH PROBLEMS WITH DISCRETION, CAREFULLY PREPARING OUR BRIEF AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, TAKING A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH.

7. CONSEQUENCES OF ABSORPTION PROBLEMS. AS NEW EQUIPMENT IS DELIVERED, WE MAY CLEARLY EXPECT THREE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF IRANIAN INABILITY TO HANDLE EQUIPMENT IN SAME WAY AS A FULLY DEVELOPED COUNTRY:

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A. SOME PROGRAMS WILL INEVITABLY BE STRETCHED OUT. DELAYS IN CONSTRUCTION AND PERSONNEL TRAINING WILL MEAN THAT DESPITE THEIR BEST INTENTIONS, IRANIANS WILL HAVE TO DEFER FULL UTILIZATION OF SOME EQUIPMENT. THIS WILL NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT GOI WILL ASK FOR DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT TO BE DELAYED. IRANIANS HAVE REPEATEDLY INDICATED THAT BECAUSE OF FEAR OF POSSIBLE FUTURE U.S. ARMS SALES EMBARGO, THEY WOULD PREFER TO TAKE DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT AND STORE IT IN IRAN. NEVERTHE LESS, DESPITE STRONG IRANIAN PREFERENCES, SOME SCHEDULE DELAYS WILL SURELY BE IMPOSED BY PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.

B. MORE FOREIGN TECHNICIANS WILL BE REQUIRED HERE. IRANIAN GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES WITH LATENT IRANIAN XENOPHOBIA AND TENSIONS THAT CAN BE CREATED IN CITIES BY GROWING PRESENCE OF FOREIGN WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. HOWEVER, GOI AND MOST EDUCATED IRANIANS WE HAVE TALKED TO SEEM COMPLETELY WILLING TO PAY THIS PRICE FOR DEVELOPMENT UNTIL DATE IN FUTURE WHEN THERE WILL BE ADEQUATE NUMBER OF IRANIAN SKILLED WORKERS. THIS IS A SUBJECT THAT WE ARE MONITORING CLOSELY.

C. SHARP GOI DISSATISFACTION WITH USG AND U.S. COMPANIES WILL OCCUR WHEN INTEGRATION OF NEW SYSTEMS FAILS OR IS DELAYED BECAUSE OF IRANIAN SHORTCOMINGS. IN RECENT MONTHS WE HAVE HAD FORETASTE OF THIS THROUGH SHAH'S LECTURES TO US IN PUBLIC PRINT ON ESCALATION OF ARMS COSTS AND BREAKDOWNS IN SUPPLY OF SPARES. INEVITABLY THERE WILL BE MORE CRITICISM (WHETHER OR NOT IT IS EARNED) AND DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS THERE WILL BE SOME EFFECT ON OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE WE CAN WEATHER THIS KIND OF CRITICISM AND DO OUR BEST TO KEEP IT WITHIN BOUNDS BY MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO ARRANGE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT. WORKING FOR US WILL BE THE FACT THAT IRANIAN STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE ARE GENERALLY LOWER THAN OURS. AND, AS NOTED, IRANIANS KNOW, IF THEY WILL NOT ALWAYS ADMIT, THEIR OWN SHORTCOMINGS AND THEIR CONTINUING DEPENDENCE ON US FOR SUPPORT.

D. A FOURTH EFFECT IS MORE PROBLEMATIC. BURDEN PLACED ON IRANIAN SERVICES COULD SERIOUSLY DEGRADE THEIR FIGHTING CAPABILITIES AND CREATE BITTER FRUSTRATIONS IN MILITARY OFFICER CORPS. THERE IS PRESENTLY NO INDICATION OF EITHER DEVELOPMENT, BUT WE ARE ALERT TO THOSE TENDENCIES.

8. COURSES OF ACTION. THERE ARE SEVERAL MEASURES WE MIGHT TAKE TO PROMOTE IRANIAN UNDERSTANDING, AND POSITIVE APPROACHES, TO ABSORPTIVE

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CAPACITY PROBLEMS:

A. WE HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT NO LETTER OF OFFER FOR A MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEM BE PRESENTED TO IRAN WITHOUT DETAILED BRIEFING AS TO ALL FORESEEABLE IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED IN ACQUISITION OF THAT SYSTEM. IN REF (B) WE RECOMMENDED SUCH A BRIEFING IN CONNECTION WITH IRANIAN INTEREST IN AWACS AND WERE ASSURED THAT IT WOULD BE PROVIDED (REF C), IRANIAN INTEREST IN AIRCRAFT HAS GROWN MORE PRECISE BUT WE HAVE NO INDICATION OF PLANS FOR REQUESTED BRIEFING. SAME REQUIREMENT IN OUR VIEW SHOULD BE MAINTAINED FOR IRANIAN INTEREST IN F-16S AND F-18S, NOW BEING GIVEN CAREFUL ATTENTION BY GOI, AS WELL AS OTHER MAJOR DEFENSE SYSTEMS WHICH ARE TO COME.

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) AS RECEIVED.

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 /035 W

----- 028037

R 061140Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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B. RECENTLY INSTITUTED PROGRAM STATUS REVIEWS (PSR) CONDUCTED BY DEFREP AND MAAG FOR MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE VERY COMMENDABLE INITIATIVE. WE ARE ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH REF (D) IN WHICH CNO PROPOSES TO ARRANGE PSRS FOR ALL MAJOR NAVAL SYSTEMS. MAAG ALSO SUBMITS QUARTELY TAFT REPORTS TO SENIOR IRANIAN MILITARY OFFICERS WHICH PROVIDE ASSESSMENTS OF MAJOR PROGRAMS INVOLVING TAFT. WE BELIEVE THESE PERIODIC DISCUSSIONS OF PARTICULAR SYSTEMS SHOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY REGULARLY SCHEDULED GENERAL BRIEFINGS ON SUCH SUBJECTS

AS IRANIAN PERFORMANCE IN SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR EACH OF THE THREE SERVICES. IN OTHER WORDS, WE SHOULD KEEP CONTINUALLY BEFORE IRANIAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP THE RECORD OF THEIR PROGRESS AS MEASURED AGAINST REQUIREMENTS IN MILITARY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. REGULAR REVIEWS WILL AVOID SHOCK EFFECTS OF HAPHAZARD DELIVERY OF BAD NEWS. EMPHASIS SHOULD BE ON WAYS TO WORK SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS. IRANIANS FREQUENTLY COMPLAIN THAT THEY NEED NO FURTHER HAND-WRINGING OVER LOCAL FAILURES; THEY NEED ANSWERS AND NEW TECHNIQUES.

C. THESE EFFORTS ON TECHNICAL LEVEL SHOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED FROM TIME TO TIME IN COURSE OF HIGH LEVEL U.S. DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SHAH AND HIS PRINCIPAL ADVISORS. THE AMBASSADOR PERIODICALLY RAISES SUBJECT OF DIFFICULTIES IN ABSORBING NEW EQUIPMENT AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. WHEN SENIOR MILITARY OR CIVILIAN DOD OFFICIALS VISIT IRAN THEY SHOULD ALSO TACTFULLY TAKE UP THE THEME. SOME VISITORS IN THE PAST HAVE SKILLFULLY CONVEYED THEIR MESSAGE ON ABSORPTIVE CAPABILITY

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THROUGH DISCUSSION WITH THE SHAH OF COMPLEX PROBLEMS US FORCES HAVE HAD TO FACE WITH NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS. IMPLICATION THAT IRAN WOULD HAVE EVEN GREATER DIFFICULTIES COMES ACROSS WITHOUT BEING BLUNTLY STATED. SENSITIVITIES OF PROUD GOI LEADERSHIP MUST BE BORNE IN MIND. AWKWARD PRESENTATIONS OF IRANIAN SHORTCOMINGS COULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO OUR INTENTIONS.

D. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE THAT ORGANIZATION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA ON NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS SHOULD BE IMPROVED AND ESTABLISHED A STANDARD PROCEDURE. WHEN WE LEARN OF SERIOUS IRANIAN INTEREST IN A MAJOR SYSTEM (E.G., AWACS, F-16, F-18) STATE AND DOD OFFICES SHOULD GO TO WORK IMMEDIATELY TO DRAW TOGETHER ALL RELEVANT FACTS AND PROJECTIONS WHICH SHOULD BEAR ON GOI DECISION-MAKING. WE ARE NOT SUGGESTING THAT SALES BE DENIED, BUT IN CERTAIN CASES IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO SUGGEST DELAYED DELIVERY OR REDUCED QUANTITY SO AS NOT TO OVERLOAD IRANIAN FORCES. WE SHOULD IMMEDIATELY TACKLE JOB OF PREPARING BRIEFING ON PERSONNEL, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COST IMPLICATIONS OF ADVANCED SYSTEMS. MAAG SHOULD IMPROVE ITS ABILITY TO ASSESS IRANIAN REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSED ACQUISITIONS AND CAPABILITY TO ABSORB THEM. IN THIS CONNECTION, MAAG HAS INTENTION OF ESTABLISHING SYSTEMS ANALYSIS CAPABILITY UNDER NEW REORGANIZATION. WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW SUCH COMPLEX QUESTIONS AS TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR OIL BARTER TO DEFLECT US FROM ESSENTIAL ANALYSIS OF EFFECTS OF PROPOSED SALES. IN SUMMARY, THERE SHOULD BE A MORE SYSTEMATIC PROCESS FOR FORMULATING PRESENTATIONS OF DATA ON NEW SYSTEMS AND WEIGHING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES BEFORE IRANIAN THINKING HAS HAD A CHANCE TO HARDEN.

9. DEFREP FND ARMISH/MAAG CONCUR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, MILITARY TRAINING, MILITARY CAPABILITIES, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TEHRAN06825
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760260-0439
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760786/aaaacyco.tel
Line Count: 384
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TEHRAN 4481
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 13 JAN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JAN 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <17 FEB 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRAN'S CAPACITY TO ABSORB SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT
TAGS: MASS, MCAP, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006